

DELAWARE RE-ENTRY EDUCATION TASK FORCE

June 25, 2014

9:30 a.m.

**Haslet Armory (Conference Room 219), 122 Martin Luther
King Jr. Blvd. South, Dover, DE
MEETING MINUTES**

Task Force members in attendance:

Kimberly H. Chandler, Dept. of Safety and Homeland Security
Patricia Dailey Lewis, Attorney General's Office
Jennifer Davis, Dept. of Education
Nancy Dietz, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Karl Hines on behalf of the Honorable Robert M. Coupe, Dept. of Correction
Eliza Hirst on behalf of Tania Culley, Office of the Child Advocate
Jennifer Kline, Citizen Representative
The Honorable Chandlee Johnson Kuhn, Family Court, New Castle County Courthouse
Tyrone Jones, Astra Zeneca
Pastor Meredith Griffin, IMAC
The Honorable Jennifer Ranji (Chair), Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Erik Raser-Schramm, Citizen Representative
John Sadowski on behalf of The Honorable Mark T. Murphy, Dept. of Education
Laurisa Schutt, Teach for America – Delaware
Kim Siegel on behalf of The Honorable Matthew Denn, Lieutenant Governor's Office
Henry Smith on behalf of The Honorable Rita Landgraf, Dept. of Health and Social Services
The Honorable Stephen T. Smyk, Representative
Wendy Strauss, Citizen Representative
Dory Zatuchni, Jewish Family Services of Delaware

Others in attendance:

Ashley Davis, Family Court
Sierra Dunn, Family Court
Karen Eller, GACEC Teacher
Mary Fenimore, WSUC
Mike Giufre, Family Court
Alison McGonigal, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Angela Porter, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Tom Rhodes, Family Court
Cara Sawyer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Kelly Schaffer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (consultant)
Joe Sparco, Family Court
Leigh Ann Harrison, Legislative Aide to the Honorable Harris B. McDowell, III, Senator
Brian Moore on behalf of Merv Daugherty, Red Clay Consolidated School District

1. Welcome and Introductions

Secretary Ranji welcomed the group to the meeting. She provided context about the origin of the Task Force. In the fall, Governor Markell visited the Ferris School and had the opportunity to talk with a group of young men about their experiences. He heard feedback from youth that they felt they were doing well educationally while in Ferris but were concerned about what would happen when they left. Creating a Task Force seemed like a good opportunity to re-energize efforts to support kids who are leaving Ferris. The Governor also met with DSCYF staff about the challenges youth encounter when re-integrating into an education setting and expressed a desire to explore what can be done to help these kids be successful. In his State of the State address earlier this year the Governor announced the creation of the Task Force. Task Force members received a copy of the Executive Order with their letters of appointment.

Secretary Ranji described the continuum of supports for youth; before they attend Ferris, when they are with us, and when they leave. These are all important factors to their success. Some youth can re-integrate successfully, while others need specific or alternative supports. The Task Force will consider the different options to meet the needs of youth and will look at different pathways. Secretary Ranji provided an example of a boy who left the Ferris School and had fifteen adults at his transition meeting to help ensure his success with re-entry. The Secretary next described three options being explored – youth transitioning back to their home district, attending an alternative school, or a different pathway that meets their unique needs. The Task Force will make recommendations about what they think will work. The goal is to think broadly about a longer-term solution.

Secretary Ranji reviewed the agenda and noted today's meeting will focus on sharing

information and identifying what types of information would be helpful to the group over the next several months. The Task Force's report is due in December.

2. Defining the Problem – Data Summary

Secretary Ranji presented a data summary document that was distributed at the meeting. She summarized national data as well as presented a snapshot of data from Delaware. National data shows 48% of youth in custody are currently functioning below grade level, and only 22% of youth 16 and older who are in a facility at least 180 days report earning high school credentials during their time in custody. Among youth who have been in a juvenile correctional facility, only 12% have graduated or earned a GED. Additional data was provided about education obtained while in secure care. In Delaware, a report of youth who were in DSCYF secure care facilities found that out of 184 youth, 89 were withdrawn, expelled, inactive or had dropped out and 34 were back in a secure care setting. This Task Force will focus on what happens to youth when they leave secure care.

Data was also presented on recidivism. It is estimated in a report by The Pew Charitable Trusts that 75% of incarcerated youths are re-arrested within three years of their release. In Delaware, in 2010 approximately 2/3 of youth released from secure care facilities were back in secure care within 18 months. Nancy Dietz and others at DSCYF will be setting up a data office to be able to track and provide more up to date data.

3. Delaware's Juvenile Justice System

Nancy Dietz, Director, and Alison McGonigal, Deputy Director, of DSCYF Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (YRS), presented an overview of Delaware's juvenile justice system. Ms. Dietz described the types of secure care in Delaware and Alison McGonigal described

system reform efforts by YRS. YRS participated in the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative in 2003, and explored current practice to find that changes in code were needed to improve the system. Additionally, YRS began to reconsider how and when it was sending youth with low-level offenses to detention. Youth who did not require secure care were no longer sent to detention. Ms. McGonigal described partnerships with Juvenile Probation and the Public Defender's Office as key in making changes. They also found cost savings by sending fewer kids out of state, and developing and expanding an array of community service options instead.

Ms. McGonigal continued to explain the continuum of evidence-based secure care services and talked about how they are being implemented in various parts of the state. Additionally, she spoke about the PACT assessment tool (Positive Achievement Change Tool), which helps to inform case management planning. She described the re-entry process for youth that are returning to their communities and spoke about case plan development by probation officers. She stressed the importance of team planning, making sure the plan is youth-driven, strengths based and includes families and community-based supports. Ms. McGonigal also stressed the importance of advocacy support for youth and families.

Finally, Ms. McGonigal spoke about deep end service enhancements, which started last year. She described outdated Dispositional Guidelines that are not aligned with the service match process and assessments. She spoke about updating those guidelines to now focus on addressing needs and youths strengths.

A question was raised about the areas of the state to which youth are returning. Ms. McGonigal stated Georgetown, Seaford, Dover and Wilmington are places youth most frequently return.

Ms. Dietz continued the presentation by further describing the process for re-entry. She

described probation officers meeting with youth and their families. She talked about having the support team focus on objectives, strategies and timelines to help ensure success of the youth upon re-entry. Each plan is developed based on the PACT assessment but is modified as needed based on input from youth, family, and dependent upon court ordered conditions. Ms. Dietz also discussed aftercare services, including Cognitive Behavioral Self-Counseling, Sanctuary model, Street Smarts and Casey Life Skills among others. Most programs are provided by Vision Quest.

Secretary Ranji noted recidivism is one way to look at issues encountered with re-entry. Trying to keep kids out of the deep end of the system has an impact. Currently, 1,500-1,600 kids are participating in community services at some level, while 150-160 youth are in secure care. More youth are coming into the system at the lower end of services and thus never having to hit level 4 or 5. Level 5 is where the state sees high recidivism rates.

A question was raised about whether or not there are reports on the effectiveness of aftercare programs. Ms. Dietz responded that there are reports but not to the degree they would like. YRS is promoting a data management system to be able to break down numbers in ways that will allow them to see which programs are effective. All programs are evidence-based and some kids access a combination of programs. Ms. McGonigal described a tool currently in use, which helps match youth with services and also helps determine the degree to which each program is true to the model. This tool is currently being implemented in four community-based programs.

A question was raised about the length of time youth are engaged in aftercare programs. It depends on the needs of each child. Ms. Dietz noted that Delaware has a grant from the Juvenile Justice Research Institute that will help them assess programming in secure care. Next, a Task Force member asked what the caseload is for probation officers who are overseeing re-entry.

Ms. Dietz responded that the current caseload is 17-25. The national average is up to 30, and higher on the adult side. Ms. McGonigal noted that caseloads in Delaware used to be 40 and above and at the time the quality of probation services was poor. The state looked at kids in lower levels of services who didn't need probation supervision and connected them with community providers instead. A Task Force member asked what the payment is for services per child. Ms. Dietz responded that for some programs the cost is based per child and in other cases it depends on the contract for services. A follow up question was raised about whether or not the new tool will look at the effectiveness of PACT. Ms. McGonigal responded that all programs are evidence-based. Judge Kuhn stated they have found rates of overtreatment leading to negative impact. She suggested it would be interesting to look at data from that perspective. Judge Kuhn offered to help look into this issue with a small group. Secretary Ranji responded that it will be important to look at both positive and negative outcomes.

Finally, Secretary Ranji noted the Governor's recommended budget includes a request to begin a youth advocate program that will provide community-based advocates for a small group of kids when they leave secure care. It will not serve a lot of kids, as it will be intensive services; 5-10 kids per caseload.

4. Educational Services for Youth in DSCYF Custody

Angie Porter, Education Unit Supervisor at DSCYF, presented a summary of educational services for youth in DSCYF custody. She began by describing her professional background, which includes 26 years in Delaware education, 15 years of which have been with DSCYF. Ms. Porter described experiences working for traditional public schools, a charter school and eventually the Education Unit at DSCYF. Her experiences provided an opportunity to see education at several different levels of the system.

The Education Unit works cooperatively with the Department of Education (DOE) and all teachers are licensed through DOE. The Education Unit supervises 13 facilities, including secure care under YRS, non-secure alternatives, programs under the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Services. Children ages 5 to 18 are served. Last year, there were over 600 unique children served and the number is closer to 800 when counting children who have returned. Ms. Porter described length of stay, stating that it varies from 3-6 months for mental health services, and around 6-9 months for Ferris School. Secure detention can be a bit shorter or longer – even up to a year or more – depending on the need of the child.

The Education Unit does not have the same resources or the same function as public schools. Facilities should be working in adjunct with public schools, particularly around programming, credits and special education services. There are about 60 teachers under the Education Unit, with some facilities as few as 1 teacher and aide. Ferris has 6-7 teachers, certified in content areas. About 60% of students served qualify for special education, and among early childhood children served 80-90% are special education students. Teachers consult with districts and invite them to planning meetings for children who are receiving special education services.

Ms. Porter next describes the process when youth enter secure care. When they enter, their home school or last school of record (not an alternative school) is identified and their school records are gathered. Credit mining at the secondary level is often a barrier to recovering credits toward graduation. While in secure care, 6th grade and above take the BASI assessment, which is also used in other detention settings across states. The assessment includes reading comprehension and math applications. Ms. Porter described that when she came into her position she found that over the last 10 years scores remained stagnant or went backwards. When youth enter custody the Education Unit also looks at records from districts – attendance, health and discipline – all

within 5 days of placement. She also described assessment practices in care settings, including students in secure care taking the DCAS and SAT, and cited that 11 of 18 students that took the SAT scored 1000 or higher.

The Education Unit and leadership at Ferris, including Principal Rod Sutton, collaborated to plan remediation. This past year 85% of students who took the BASI after 6 months showed 6 months to 1 year of gain, and several students showed 2-3 years gain. Last year there were 15-20 students who posted 100 points or more gain from the previous year on DCAS. Ms. Porter described the need to find ways to make education relevant to the students in secure care. The challenge is ensuring their success when they leave.

Ms. Porter described curriculum and coursework provided in secure care. Blended learning and online coursework are becoming increasingly available. The Education Unit currently works with NovaNet for online courses and will be switching to Edgenuity, which has a catalog of online courses and is aligned with common core. Edgenuity also has language coursework, which will help students meet their 2 year language requirement, as well as courses to help students on career and technical education pathways. Ms. Porter also described how four students have taken tests to see if they qualify for credits at Del State and Del Tech.

Additionally, at the Groves School students can go back to get their high school diploma if they have obtained their GED. Groves provides this service free of charge. The Department has also had contact with Williamson Free Trade School to connect youth to programming for job skills.

A question was raised about who monitors state placements and how many are in state. All 184 kids reported are in state. A follow up question asked how many are in special education.

Secretary Ranji responded that the Department would look into the data.

Jennifer Kline, an attorney for CASA responded that she is a lawyer who represented DSCYF and DOE at times and focused on special education. General education students have one set of rights in Delaware and special education students have a whole different set of rights. There are at times breakdowns in the system or families that do not have advocates to help access those rights. Judge Kuhn responded that data will show issues of disability and how it relates to race and gender. In California research has been done to show the substantial impact of kids being in child welfare. She noted she has been thinking about the impact of kids being in the system and how specific data would be helpful to show those kids' outcomes.

Secretary Ranji concluded this agenda item by noting that teaching in any school is a challenge, and even more so in the juvenile justice system since the teachers don't know how long they will have the kids. Building an education plan is key.

5. Alternative Schools in Delaware

John Sadowski presented background information on alternative schools in Delaware. He described the funding mechanisms for alternative schools. Title 14 in the Delaware Code provides that 30% of funding for alternative schools comes from local districts, which is about \$3.1 million. In the last three years, about \$12,000 was spent per child – a combination of state and local funds. State average for districts is about \$500-600 more per child.

A Task Force member asked if there is a significant difference between counties. Mr. Sadowski responded there is about a \$1,000 difference between Kent County and New Castle County. A follow up question was raised about what makes up the \$12,000 per child. It is costs such as personnel, transportation, supplies, materials and programming. A Task Force member suggested it would be helpful to see data on how funding is used to be able to have a

conversation about how investments are supporting kids leaving secure care.

Mr. Sadowski continued to describe the Consortium Discipline Alternative Programs (CDAP) in the state. Each academy is run through a contract. When the consortium runs programs, districts are able to purchase slots into the school. Poly Tech is the only district not participating in a consortium. Secretary Ranji updated the group that there is funding in the state budget for alternative schools and groups can apply to operate, however preference goes to consortium.

Mr. Sadowski presented data showing the number of students served by alternative schools. The average number served per year is about 690. Some students attend 30 days and others are there for 180 or more. There have been instances where students request to stay until graduation. A question was asked about how many of the kids attending alternative schools are transitioning from secure care. The data was not immediately available and Mr. Sadowski noted to follow up.

The group discussed the intersection of special education and students in alternative schools. Students have ISPs in alternative schools as part of their student success plan. When in an alternative school everything is kept up with as it would in their home school, including taking the DCAS. A request was made to see data showing the number of YRS kids transitioning back into schools by district. A Task Force member asked why 2012 numbers for students served was higher than other years. Mr. Sadowski will look into the reason why. A question was raised about the percentage of students in alternative schools classified as special education. Mr. Sadowski estimated 10%, and noted he is not aware if all students are tested to see if they require special education services.

The Task Force next discussed the link between truancy and juvenile justice and alternative schools. Mr. Sadowski said attendance goes up when students attend alternative school. A Task

Force member asked if truancy is ever a factor in kids being sent to alternative schools. Truancy is not an expellable offense, however it may be a factor in a student's overall situation. Judge Kuhn stated she is participating in a call with stakeholders through the school pathways project and as topics are pertinent she will bring information back to the Task Force. Secretary Ranji responded that the Task Force will focus on students transitioning out of secure care, but truancy is also an important issue.

The group next discussed the role of a consortium. A consortium acts as a board and has oversight from participating districts. The board makes sure the school is meeting teacher qualifications and runs the day-to-day operations. Each district's superintendent appoints members to the board. Board meetings are public. Representatives from YRS now attend board meetings, which is important for an open dialogue.

The group discussed eligibility for students attending alternative schools. Students may attend if they have an expellable offense. Principals cannot arbitrarily place students in alternative schools. When a referral is made it goes to a placement team. The placement team identifies the level of treatment at the alternative school and can also push back on the district to provide more interventions first. A question was raised about whether or not a student being in secure care qualifies them as an expellable offense. Mr. Sadowski said it is not an expellable offense. It is not defined in statute that young people coming out of secure care must go to alternative schools. Most students coming out of secure care end up in alternative schools, however. Some districts have told families they cannot come back until passing through an alternative school. Feedback was provided that youth coming out of secure care need to be looked at on an individual basis to find the right path for re-entry. Additional feedback was provided that it would be helpful to see data on the numbers of kids in transition programs.

A question was raised about how many students leaving YRS for alternative schools are special education. Feedback was provided that it is hard to have the conversation because there are so many parts of the process – for instance, expelled status and how districts handle each student. Judge Kuhn suggested it would be helpful for a small group to look at each step of the pathway and create a process map. Mr. Sadowski expressed a need to define expulsion, because it used to mean students were out of the school forever but now it is different. The group also discussed issues of kids returning to schools mid-course, behind grade level (even if they had made gains while in secure care) and the impact of having to do credit recovery. Secretary Ranji stated it will be important to look at how to help kids continue to progress academically when integrating back into schools, and also stressed the importance of looking at students individually.

Next, the Task Force discussed some of the differences between returning to an alternative school or traditional school. Some students may have challenges with returning to big class sizes. There are also social issues that will need to be dealt with. Secretary Ranji noted that the discussion on alternative schools would go beyond today, particularly related to who attends and how transitions take place. There will be follow up presentations and additional data brought back to the group. It will be important to address the individual needs of students. At future meetings the group will look at different pathways to achieving this goal.

Ms. Dietz acknowledged part of the question should also be how we can improve the time when kids are in secure to help them with re-entry, for instance credit recovery. Mr. Sadowski noted that understanding the issues would make the approach with districts easier. There may be a tipping point for change once there are a few examples from districts. Secretary Ranji stated there are 19 school districts and 20+ charters in Delaware so there is a need to find a way for consistency and local decision-making.

Feedback was provided that Task Force members visit alternative schools to see the conditions and how they operate. Another suggestion was provided that it would be helpful to talk with kids and families who are transitioning out of YRS.

6. Next Steps

Secretary Ranji summarized next steps. Meeting minutes will be circulated and she encouraged the group to share ideas about information they will want to have presented at future meetings. John Sadowski and Brian Moore will also be asked to present at a future meeting to delve deeper into some of the questions related to alternative schools. On a future agenda we will also hear from kids who have taken different pathways upon re-entry – traditional school, alternative school, different types of supports – to hear more about what has worked. The Department is also working on compiling best practice and model information and will attempt to identify guest speakers who can talk about successes outside of Delaware.

A question was raised about whether or not there are representatives from charters or districts on the Task Force. Secretary Ranji responded the Department will check; it is a good suggestion.

7. Public Comment

No public comments.

8. Adjournment